

A FRAIL LEAF**NO. 3269****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1911****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON***“Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?”**Job 13:25*

POOR Job! who could have been brought lower than he? He had lost his possessions, his children, his health—he was covered with sore boils—and he was aggravated by the unkind speeches of his friends. In his deep distress he turns to God, and finding no other plea so near at hand he makes a plea out of his own distress. He compares himself to the weakest thing he could think of, and then he says to God, the great and the merciful, “Will *You*, so glorious in power and so matchless in goodness—will *You* break *me*, who am like a poor leaf fallen from the tree, sere and dry, and driven to and fro in the wind?” Thus he draws an argument out of his own weakness. Because he is so low and insignificant and powerless, he lays hold upon the divine strength and pleads for pity.

It is a common figure he uses, that of a leaf driven to and fro. Strong gusts of wind, it may be in the autumn when the leaves hang but lightly upon the trees, send them falling in showers around us. Quite helpless to stay their own course, fluttering in the air to and fro, like winged birds that cannot steer themselves, but are guided by every fitful blast that blows upon them, at last they sink into the mire to be trodden down and forgotten.

To them Job likens himself—a helpless, hopeless, worthless, weak, despised, perishing thing—and he appeals to the awful Majesty on high and he says to the God of thunder and of lightning, “Will You put out Your power to destroy me? Wilt thou bring forth Your dread artillery to crush such an insignificant creature as I am? With all the goodness of Your great heart—for your name is God—that is good—will You turn Your Almighty power against me? Oh, be that far from You! Out of pity upon my utter weakness and nothingness, turn away Your hand, and break not a leaf that is driven to and fro!”

The apprehension is so startling, the appeal so forcible, that the argument may be employed in a great many ways. *How often have the sick used it*, when they have been brought to so low an ebb with physical pain that life itself seemed worthless? Stricken with disease, stung with smart, and fretted with acute pains and pangs, they feel that if the affliction continues much longer, it were better for them to die than live.

They longed for the shades of death, that they might find shelter there. Turning their face to the wall, they have said, “O God, as weak as I am, will You again smite me? Shall Your hand again fall upon me? You have laid me very low. Wherefore again do You lift up Your rod? Break not, I beseech You, a leaf that is driven to and fro!”

Not less applicable is the plea *to those who are plunged into the depths of poverty!* A man is in trouble arising from destitution. Perhaps he has been long out of work. Bread is not to be found. The children are crying, hungering, starving. The habitation has been stripped of everything which might procure a little nourishment. The poor wretch, after passing through seas of trouble, finds himself no nearer a landing-place than before, but—

*“Sees each day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end.”*

Passing through the streets he is hardly able to keep his feet from the pavement or his skin from the cold, by reason of his tattered garments. Homeless and friendless, like a leaf that is driven to and fro, he say, “O God! Will You continue this much longer? Will You not be pleased to stop Your rough wind, mitigate the sharpness of the winter, ease my adversity, and give me peace?”

So, too, *with those who are in trouble through bereavement*. One child has been taken away and then another. The shafts of death flew twice. Then came sickness with threatening omen upon one that was still nearer and dearer. Still did not the desolation stay its gloomy portents. It seemed at length as though the widow would be bereft of her last and only child, and then she cried, “O God! I am already broken. My heart is like a ploughed field—cross-ploughed—till my soul is ready to despair! Will You utterly break me? Will You spare me no consolations, no props for my old age? Must I be altogether driven away before the whirlwind and find no rest?”

Perhaps it is even more harassing in cases of *mental distress* for, after all, the sharpest pangs we feel are not those of the body, nor those of the estate, but those of the mind. When the iron enters into the soul, the rust thereof is poison. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” You may be surrounded with all the comforts of life and yet be in wretchedness more gloomy than death if the spirits are depressed. You may have no outward cause whatever for sorrow and yet if the mind be dejected, the brightest sunshine will not relieve your gloom.

At such a time, you may be vexed with cares, haunted with dreams, and scared with thoughts which distract you. You fear that your sins are not pardoned, that your past transgressions are all brought to remembrance, and that punishment is being meted out to you in full measure. The threats rise up out of God’s book and seem to lift sharp swords in their hands with which to smite you.

Time is dreadful to you, because you know it is hurrying you to eternity—and the thought of eternity stings as does an adder, because you measure the future reckoning by the present distress. At such a time, when you are faint with longing, ready to despair, and driven to the verge of madness, I can imagine your crying out, “O Lord God of mercy, I am as a leaf that is driven to and fro—will You quite break me and utterly destroy me? Have compassion, and show Your favor to Your poor broken creature!”

Many a child of God may have used this, and if he has not used it yet, he may still use it. There are times when all our evidences get clouded and all our joys are fled. Though we may still cling to the cross, yet it is with a desperate grasp. God brings our sins to remembrance till our bones, as David puts it, “are sore broken by reason of our iniquity.”

Then it is that, all broken, we can turn to the Strong for strength and use the plea of the text, “Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?” and we shall get for our answer these comforting words, “A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench.”

I. THE PLEA IS SUCH AS ARISES FROM INWARD CONSCIOUSNESS.

What plea is more powerful to ourselves than that which we draw from ourselves? A man may not be sure of aught that is without him, for eyes and ears may deceive—but he is always pretty well-assured of anything within him, for that which he perceives in his own consciousness he is very tenacious about.

Now, in this case, *Job was quite certain about his own weakness*. How could he doubt *that*? He looked upon his poor body covered with sores, he looked upon his friends who had perplexed and vexed him so much, and he felt that he was, indeed, just like a sere leaf. I do trust that many of us have been brought by God the Holy Spirit into such a humble frame of mind as to feel that, in a certain sense, this is true of us.

O God, if we know ourselves right, we are all like withered leaves. We once thought ourselves fresh and green—we reckoned that we were as good as others, we made a fine and verdant profession—but lo! You have been pleased to deal with us and all the fresh verdure of what we thought to be our piety—the natural piety which we thought we possessed—has faded and withered, and now we are convinced that we are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Nay, the

hope that we clung to, as the leaf clings to the tree, we have had to give up. We are blown away from that.

We were once upon the tree of good works—we seemed as if we had life and would always be happy there, but the winds have taken us away and we cannot hold on to our frail hope. We once thought that we could do everything—we now perceive that without Christ we can do nothing. We are cast forth as a branch separated from the vine—we are withered. What can a leaf do? What power has it to resist the wind? Just so we feel now—we can do nothing—even the sin that dwells in us, like the wind, carries us away and we are like the leaf in the wind, subject to its power.

O my brethren, what a great blessing it is to be made to know our own weakness. To empty the sinner of his folly, his vanity, and conceit is no easy matter. Christ can easily fill him with wisdom and prudence, but to get him empty—this is the work. This is the difficulty. To make a man know that he is in himself utterly lost, ruined, and undone—this is the Spirit of God's own work.

We ministers cannot make a man see that, however diligently we may point it out. Only the Spirit of God can enlighten the heart to discern it and yet, until a man does see it, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, for there are none within the pearly gates who were not once brokenhearted sinners. Who could possibly come there and sing, "Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," but those who once said, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great"?

While it is a confession of weakness, it is also *an acknowledgment of God's power to push that weakness to a direful conclusion*. "Wilt thou break me?" says the text—"Lord, You can do it. In one minute You could take away hope from every one of us now in this house of prayer." Some there are who are in the house of doom, where prayer can never be answered, and where mercy's proclamation can never be heard. God could break us. It is an easy thing for Him to destroy. And more, He is not only able, but He has the right to do it if He wills, for we are such worthless creatures through our disobedience, that we may say, in the words of the hymn—

*"If my soul were sent to hell,
Your righteous law approves it well."*

When we feel this, then let us make a proper use of our own consciousness, not to despond and faint, but to arise and go to our Father, so we shall come to God and say, "You can destroy me. You may destroy me justly and I cannot resist You. I cannot save myself from Your vengeance, nor can I merit anything at Your hand. I am as weak as water and altogether as perishing a thing as a poor withered leaf—but will You destroy me? I plead for pity. Oh! have pity upon me! O God, let Your heart yearn towards me and show me Your great compassion! I have heard that You delight in mercy and as Ben-hadad of old, with the rope about his neck, sent in unto the king, and confessed that he deserved to die, so do I confess. And as the king forgave him, even so do You with me—a guilty culprit trembling in Your presence!

*"Show pity, Lord. O Lord, forgive.
Let a repenting rebel live."*

II. This is also A VERY PITIFUL PLEA.

Though there is weakness, yet there is also power, for weakness is, for the most part, a prevalent plea with those who are strong and good. you could not see on your road home tonight a poor fainting woman, and pass her by, I trust. You could not have brought in before your presence a half-starved child, that could not drag its weary limbs along, without feeling that you must give relief. The mere sight of weakness draws pity.

As a certain town was being sacked, one of the rough soldiery is said to have spared a little child, because it said, "Please, sir, don't kill me, I am so little." The rough warrior felt the urgency of the plea. You may yourselves plead thus with God. "O God, do not destroy me! I deserve it, but oh, I am so little! Turn Your power upon some greater thing and let Your heart move with compassion towards me!"

The plea gathers force *when the weakness is confessed*. If a man shall have done you some wrong and shall come and acknowledge it, and bow down before you and confess it, why, then, you feel that you cannot take him by the throat, but you say, “Rise, I have forgiven you!” When weakness appeals to strength for protection and confession of guilt is relied on as an argument for mercy, those who are good and strong are pretty sure to be moved with compassion.

But best of all, going from the positive to the comparative, and from the comparative to the superlative, *how a confession of weakness touches your heart when it comes from your own child*. If your child has been chastised, and has confessed his wrong, and pleads with you, how you stay your hand!

Or if the child be sick and something be done to it which pains it, if while the operation is being performed he should look you in the face, and say, “Father, spare your child. I can bear no more!” you have already felt more than you can make him feel, forthwith your own tears blind you and you stay your hand. “Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” If you have faith to bring your weakness before God with the sense of a child towards Him, you surely must prevail.

Come, then, you timid trembling children of your Father who is in heaven, use this plea—“Wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro?”

III. This PLEA IS RIGHTLY ADDRESSED.

It is addressed to God. As I thought it over, it seemed to me as if I could use it with reference to each Person of the Blessed Trinity in Unity. Looking up to *the great Father of our spirits*, from whom every good and perfect gift comes down, it seemed to me that out of weakness I could say to Him, “Will *You*, whose name is Father, will *You* break a leaf that is driven to and fro? You are the God that made us—will *You* utterly destroy the earthen vessel which You have fashioned on Your wheel? Your name is ‘Preserver of men.’ Will *You* annihilate us and break us into shivers? Have You not revealed Yourself as delighting in mercy? Are You not the ‘Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin’? Have You not said, ‘Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool’? O God, the Father of heaven, will *You* break a leaf that is driven to and fro?”

And then, I thought I could address myself to the *blessed Son of God*, who is also our brother in human flesh, and say to Him, “Wilt *You* break—O *You* ‘faithful High Priest touched with a feeling of our infirmities’—‘bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh’—Brother of our soul, by whose stripes we are healed—will *You* break a leaf that is driven to and fro? Nay, by Your thorn-crowned head and Your bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your wounds and by Your death-cry, You cannot, will not, be unmerciful and unkind. Surely, they who in confidence turn to You and lay hold upon You, shall find that Your strength shall be ready to help—for though Your arm be strong to smite—it is no less strong to save.”

Again, it comes across me sweetly, “O blessed *Spirit*! Could *You* break a leaf that is driven to and fro? You are no eagle—You did descend on Christ in Jordan as a dove—your influences are soft and soothing. Your name is ‘The Comforter.’ You take of the things of Christ, not to blast us, but to bless us therewith. You are not a destroying Spirit, but a quickening Spirit, not a terrifying but an enlivening Spirit—will *You* break a leaf that is driven to and fro?”

Yea, I address You, *Thou Triune God*, You who are so full of mercy, and love, and grace, and truth, that those who have known You best have been compelled to say, ‘Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! Oh, the depths of thy lovingkindness!’ is it possible that *You* can cast away a poor, broken-hearted trembler, a poor, fearing, doubting one, who would fain be saved, but who trembles lest he should be cast away?”

IV. THIS PLEA IS BACKED UP BY MANY CASES OF SUCCESS.

We will not give many, for we have not time, but there is one case which we will mention. There was a woman whose life was exceedingly sorrowful. She was an Eastern wife and her husband had been

foolish enough to have a second mistress in the house. The woman of whom we speak, a holy woman, a woman of refined and delicate mind, a poetess, indeed, of no mean order—this poor woman, having no children, was the constant butt of her rival, whose sneering spiteful remarks chaffed and chafed her.

Her adversary, it is said, “vexed her sore to make her afraid.” Though her husband was exceedingly kind to her, yet as with a sword that cut her bones did she continually go. She was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, her spirit being broken. Still, “she feared the LORD exceedingly,” and she went up to God’s house, and it was in God’s house that she received, what was to her, perhaps, the greatest blow of her life.

If it was from her rival that she received the harshest word, it was from the High Priest of God that she received this hardest blow. As she stood there praying, using no vocal sound, but her lips moving, the High Priest—an easy-going soul, who had brought his own family to ruin by his slackness—little knowing her grief, told her that she was drunken. Being a woman to whom the thought of such a sin was as bitter as gall, it must have smitten her as with the chill blast of death, that God’s priest had said she was drunken.

But as you will all remember, the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro. There came to her a comfortable promise. Ere long that woman stood there to sing. The mercy of God had made the barren woman to rejoice and to be the joyful mother of children. The song of the Virgin Mary was modeled after the song of Hannah—that memorable poem in which she sang of the Lord who had filled the hungry with good things, while the rich He had sent away empty. In that case the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro.

In after years—to take an example of another kind—there was a king who had sinned desperately, slaying God’s servants with both hands. But he was taken captive by a powerful monarch and thrown into prison—such an noisome prison that he was among thorns—in mental as well as in material darkness. Then, troubled in spirit, tossed to and fro, and without power to help himself, Manasseh sought the Lord and he found the Lord—he prayed unto the Lord and the Lord heard him. Out of the low dungeon He did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro.

Take a later case, in our Savior’s time. The picture of those proud Pharisees hurrying into our Savior’s presence a poor fallen woman is even now in your mind’s eye. Yes, sirs, she was taken in adultery. There was no doubt of it. She was “taken in the very act,” and there she stands—nay, she kneels—all covered with blushes—before the man who is asked to judge her.

And you remember His words? He never said a word to excuse her guilt—the Savior could not and would not condone her shame. Nor would He, on the other hand, lend Himself to crush the woman who had sinned, but He said—“Where are those thine accusers? Go and sin no more!”

Let His words come unto you, poor leaf, driven to and fro! Oh, if there should be such a leaf as that driven here tonight, driven in, perhaps, by stress of weather! Men despise you—from your own sex you get faint pity—but Jesus, when you appeal to Him, will not break such a leaf that is driven to and fro!

Shall I tell another story of the woman who came behind the Master in the press and stole a cure by touching His garment? She thought she should receive a curse, but He said—“Be thou of good cheer; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” It was poor faith—it was very much like unbelief, but yet it was rewarded with a rich acceptance, for He will not break a leaf that is driven to and fro.

V. Once more, my text is A FAINT PLEA WHICH INVITES FULL SUCCOR.

“Wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro?” O Job! there is much wrapped up in what you have said.

He meant this—“Instead of breaking it, You will spare it. You will gather it up, You will give it life again.” It is like that text, “A bruised reed he will not break.” Oh, it means more than that—it means that He will heal its bruises. “A smoking flax he will not quench.” That is good, but it means more. It means that He will stoop down to it and with His soft breath He will blow that smoking flax into a flame—He will not let it go out. He will preserve its heat and make something more of it.

O you who are brought to the very lowest of weakness! use that weakness in pleading with God, and He will return unto you with such a fullness of blessing that you shall receive the pardon of sin. You shall be accepted through the righteousness of Christ. You shall be dear to the heart of God. You shall be filled with His Spirit and you shall be blessed with all the fullness of God.

My Lord is such a One that if a beggar asks a penny of Him, He gives him gold, and if you ask only for the pardon of sins, He will give you all the covenant blessings which He has been pleased so bounteously to provide for the necessities of His people. Come, poor guilty one—needy, helpless, broken and bruised—come by faith and let your weakness plead with God through Jesus Christ.

VI. WE MAY USE THIS PLEA—MANY OF US WHO HAVE LONG KNOWN THE SAVIOR.

Perhaps our faith has got to be very low. O Lord, will You destroy my little faith? I know there is sin in it. To be so unbelieving as I am is no little crime, but Lord, I thank You that I have any faith. It is weak and trembling, but it is faith of Your own giving. Oh, break not the poor leaf that is driven to and fro!

It may be your hope is not very bright. You cannot see the golden gates, though they are very near. Well, but your hope shall not be destroyed because it is clouded. You can say, “Lord, will You destroy my hope because it is dim?” No, that He will not!

Perhaps you are conscious that you have not been as useful lately as you once were, but you may say, “Lord, will You destroy my usefulness because I have been laid aside, or have not done what I ought to have done in Your service?” Bring your little graces to Christ as the mothers brought their little children, and ask Him to put His hands upon them and to bless them. Bring your mustard seed to Christ and ask Him to make it grow into a tree, and He will do it. But never think that He will destroy you, or that He will destroy the works of His own hand in you.

Oh! that I could so preach as to give the comfort to you which I have felt in my own soul while musing over these words! I wish that some who feel how lost, how empty, and how ruined they are, could now believe in the great and the good heart of my Lord Jesus Christ. Little do they know how glad He will be to save them.

You will be glad to be saved, but He will be more glad to save you. You will be thankful to sit at the feast, but of all that come to the banquet, there is no heart as glad as the heart of the King. When the King came in to see the guests, I know there were gleams of joy in His face which were not to be found in the faces of any of the guests. He has the joy of benevolence.

Perhaps you have sometimes felt a thrill of pleasure when you have done some good to your poor fellow creatures. Now, bethink what must be the joy of Christ, the joy of the Father, and the joy of the Holy Spirit—the joy of doing good to those who do not deserve it, the joy of bestowing favors upon the wicked and the unthankful, the joy of showing that He does good because He is good—not because *you* are good, but because *He* is good.

Thus the Lord God will leap over the mountains of your sins, and your prejudices, and the rivers of your iniquities, that He may come unto you and display the full glory of His lovingkindness and His tender mercy.

Oh! that some might now for the first time be drawn to Jesus, put their trust in Him, and find pardon and peace.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 130:1-8 AND 1 JOHN 1:1-10; 2:1-2

Verse 1. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

The most eminent of God’s saints have been in the depths. Wherefore, then, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the

crown without first carrying a cross? David saw the depths, and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths.

Learn hence that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God's ear, and then God's long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD." Do not say, "Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends."

*"Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be
Hear what the Lord hath done for me."*

2. LORD, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the psalmist proceeds, therefore—

3. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand.

That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His justice to its utmost severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of men, being men at the best, are sinners ever at their best estate.

4. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

If there were no mercy there would be no love in any human heart, and that would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness. Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God, that the holiest of God's saints need to be accepted on the footing of a Mediator, and to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

There is a waiting of expectancy, we believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and we hold out the hand for it. There is a waiting of resignation, we know not what God may do nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace. 'Tis is a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait His own explanations, and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them.

6. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break. Many a weary patient tossed upon the bed of pain has waited for the morning, saying, "Would God it were morning, for then perhaps I might find ease." And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning.

So does David's soul watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh! there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God. I recollect that Rutherford said, "I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that—the loving of Him will be heaven enough for me." Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful.

*"To those who call, how kind thou art, how good to those who seek;
But what to those who find? Ah! this, nor tongue nor pen can show,
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know."*

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God.

7-8. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning sacrifice and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are

without fault before the throne of God. “I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed saith the LORD that dwelleth in Zion.” May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise.

1 John 1. Verse 1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that He was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon Him, is exceedingly important and hence John—(whose style, by the way, in this epistle is precisely like the style which he uses in his Gospel)—John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in His eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial man, for he says—“We have heard Him”—hearing is good evidence. “Which we have seen him with our own eyes”—certainly eye-sight is good, clear evidence. “Which we have looked upon”—this is better still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze.

But still better—“which our hands have handled,” for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ’s bosom, and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Savior. We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ’s incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence.

2. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

That same eternal Being who is Very God of Very God, and is worthy to be called essentially Life, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and the apostles could say—“We beheld his glory.”

3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you—

See how he does hammer this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death-knell of every doubt!

3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us:

But John, what is the value of fellowship with you, you and your brethren, a parcel of poor fishermen? Who wants fellowship with you—hooted, despised, mocked, and persecuted in every city—who wants fellowship with you?

3. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

What a leap from the fisherman to the Father’s throne, from the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh, John, we would have fellowship with you now! We will have fellowship with your scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with you, and with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.

4. And these things write I unto you that your joy may be full.

Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us, that our joy may be full. Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Not a light, nor the light, though He is both, but that He is light. Scripture uses the term light for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is light, and then in his usual style, John, who not only tells you a truth, but always guards it, adds—“in whom is no darkness at all.”

6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God’s people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God. Nay, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the darkness of sin, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not the truth.

7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,—

Not to the same degree, but in the same manner—

7. *We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*

So you see that when we walk the best, when we walk in the light, as He is in the light—when our fellowship is of the highest order, yet still we want daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my Soul—it does not say, “The blood of Jesus Christ *cleansed*,” but “*cleanseth*.” If guilt return, His power may be proved again and again—there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall not be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

8-9. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Oh, those words, and more especially that glorious word “all”! This must include the vilest sin that ever stained human nature, the blackest grime that ever came from the black heart of man. And now John is very careful when he strikes a blow to hit completely. He has already smitten those who say they have no sin, and now he smites those who say they did not at one time have any.

10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

1 John 2. Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

He is anxious that they should not sin. He knows they do, and that if they say they do not, they lie. Still the Christian’s object is sinless perfection, and though he will never have it till he gets to heaven, that is all the better because he will always, then, be pressing forward and never reckoning that he has attained it.

1-2. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

By which is meant, not only that Jesus Christ died for Gentiles as well as Jews, and for some of all nations, but that there is that in the atonement of Christ which might be sufficient for every creature under heaven if God had so chosen every creature, the limitation is lying, not in the value of the atonement itself, but in the design and intention of the Eternal God.

God sent His Son to lay down His life for His sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and specially for the elect. Yet at the same time the price offered was so precious, the blood was so infinite in value, that if every man that ever lived had to be redeemed, Christ could have done it. It is this that make us bold to preach the Gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the atonement, though still we know that the design of it is for the chosen people of God alone.

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